

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSING OF RCSD ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Currently, New York state pays RCSD 90 percent of transportation costs for students, but only if they travel more than 1.5 miles to school. This policy provides an incentive for parents to enroll their children in schools outside their neighborhoods. During the current school year, only 17 percent of Rochester elementary-school students, on average attend their neighborhood school. Only 14 percent, on average, attend the K-to-8 school in their neighborhood. If Rochester had flexibility to bus students less than 1.5 miles, more families would choose neighborhood schools.

Here are some factors we need to consider when evaluating busing issues:

1. The initial school choices parents make based on busing availability is for kindergarten. Few parents want their five year-old walking alone even 3 or 5 blocks in good weather, let alone in winter.
2. Once the school choice is made to permit busing, the student is likely to continue going to that school until they graduate from that elementary school.
3. A number of organizations have tried to organize "walking school-buses" That would save on busing costs but they only work if there is a concentration of students attending their neighborhood school.
4. Schools benefit from parent and community engagement. If the child's school is 1.5 or more miles away it is very difficult for the parent to get to their child's school via public transportation for school functions, to talk to teachers or to volunteer.
5. It is easier to recruit volunteers from the neighborhood to work in the school if indeed many neighborhood students attend the school.
6. If students attend their neighborhood school, friendships made in school extend back into the neighborhood. This brings parents together and builds community.

We would appreciate your support in our effort to make neighborhood schools the rule rather than the exception for most Rochester families.

Please sign the attached petition

